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April 9, 2019

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition &
Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve from pre-kindergarten through college, we would like to submit for the record the following comments in connection with the April 10 hearing, "Perspectives on Child Nutrition Reauthorization."

Our nation's child nutrition programs are critical in fighting hunger, promoting health and wellness, and preparing students to learn. Reauthorization must:

- Protect the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010's healthy guidelines for school meals, which have had widespread, positive effects on children's access to healthy foods during the school day;
- Protect the Community Eligibility Program, which provides an important and efficient opportunity for free meals for children in high-poverty schools;
- Protect eligible children's access to school meals by leveraging additional opportunities to directly certify low-income children for free school meals;
- Ensure that any changes to the process of verifying eligibility do not cause eligible children to lose school meal benefits and do not increase schools' administrative burden;
- Include ongoing professional development and training for food service managers and staff at no cost, during regular, paid working hours, and maximize hands-on training when appropriate;
- Provide adequate equipment and infrastructure so that schools can serve healthy meals in a cost-effective manner; and
- Increase access to summer food and other out-of-school time programs, particularly those connected to educational, enrichment, and recreational activities.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns about the need for a strong reauthorization of child nutrition programs. Educators know firsthand that hungry children struggle to learn; access to an adequate and healthy diet is essential to academic success.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association